

What is claimed is:

1. A peer-to-peer relay network, comprising:

a plurality of  $N$  peer systems;

5 wherein each peer system in said peer-to-peer relay network is connected to a number of other peer systems in said peer-to-peer relay network that is less than or equal to a connection limit,

said connection limit is greater than or equal to 2,

said connection limit is less than or equal to  $N-2$ ,

10 each peer system in said peer-to-peer relay network is configured to relay data to peer systems connected to that peer system according to a set of one or more relay rules, each peer system is a participant or a spectator,

at least one peer system is a participant,

at least one peer system is a spectator,

15 a participant is configured to generate data to be relayed in said peer-to-peer relay network, and

a spectator is configured to relay data generated by a participant.

2. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, further comprising:

20 a server connected to each peer system.

3. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:

said at least one participant is playing an online game.

25 4. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:

said at least one participant is performing.

5. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 4, wherein:

said performing is playing music.

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6. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:  
said at least one participant is teaching.

5 7. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:  
at least two peer systems are participants, and  
each participant has a connection to at least one other participant.

8. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:  
each peer system is configured not to relay data generated by a spectator.

10 9. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:  
at least one spectator is a conditional spectator,  
a conditional spectator is configured to request permission to send data generated  
by the conditional spectator to other peer systems to be relayed throughout said peer-to-  
15 peer relay network,  
each peer system is configured to relay data generated by a conditional spectator  
if that conditional spectator has received permission to send that data.

10 20 10. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:  
at least one peer system is a network-enabled game console.

11. The peer-to-peer relay network of claim 1, wherein:  
at least two peer systems are connected through the Internet.

25 12. A method of relaying data in a peer-to-peer relay network, comprising:  
receiving data at a relaying peer system from a sending peer system connected to  
the relaying peer system in a peer-to-peer relay network, wherein said data has associated  
information identifying the origin peer system that generated said data;  
confirming said origin peer system is permitted to send data to be relayed through  
30 said peer-to-peer relay network;

applying a set of one or more relay rules to select zero or more peer systems indicated by said set of one or more relay rules to which to relay said data; and

relaying said data to any peer systems selected by applying said set of one or more relay rules;

5            wherein each peer system in said peer-to-peer relay network is a participant or a spectator.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein:

10            a spectator is not permitted to send data generated by the spectator to be relayed throughout the peer-to-peer relay network.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein:

15            each peer system stores a connection limit defining a number of other peer systems up to which a peer system is permitted to connect in that peer-to-peer relay network, and

              each peer system stores a set of one or more relay rules defining how a peer system is to relay data to other peer systems connected to that peer system in that peer-to-peer relay network.

20            15. A peer system in a peer-to-peer relay network, comprising:

              means for receiving data at a relaying peer system from a sending peer system connected to the relaying peer system in a peer-to-peer relay network, wherein said data has associated information identifying the origin peer system that generated said data;

25            means for confirming said origin peer system is permitted to send data to be relayed through said peer-to-peer relay network;

              means for applying a set of one or more relay rules to select zero or more peer systems indicated by said set of one or more relay rules to which to relay said data; and

              means for relaying said data to any peer systems selected by applying said set of one or more relay rules;

30            wherein each peer system in said peer-to-peer relay network is a participant or a spectator.

16. The peer system of claim 15, wherein:

a spectator is not permitted to send data generated by the spectator to be relayed throughout the peer-to-peer relay network.

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17. The peer system of claim 15, wherein:

said peer system stores a connection limit defining a number of other peer systems up to which said peer system is permitted to connect in that peer-to-peer relay network, and

10        said peer system stores a set of one or more relay rules defining how said peer system is to relay data to other peer systems connected to that peer system in that peer-to-peer relay network.

18. A computer program, stored on a tangible storage medium, for use in a peer

15        system in a peer-to-peer relay network, the program comprising executable instructions that cause a computer to:

process received data at a relaying peer system from a sending peer system connected to the relaying peer system in a peer-to-peer relay network, wherein said data has associated information identifying the origin peer system that generated said data;

20        confirm said origin peer system is permitted to send data to be relayed through said peer-to-peer relay network;

apply a set of one or more relay rules to select zero or more peer systems indicated by said set of one or more relay rules to which to relay said data; and

25        relay said data to any peer systems selected by applying said set of one or more relay rules;

wherein each peer system in said peer-to-peer relay network is a participant or a spectator.

19. The computer program of claim 18, wherein:

30        a spectator is not permitted to send data generated by the spectator to be relayed throughout the peer-to-peer relay network.

20. The computer program of claim 18, wherein:

said peer system stores a connection limit defining a number of other peer  
systems up to which said peer system is permitted to connect in that peer-to-peer relay  
5 network, and

said peer system stores a set of one or more relay rules defining how said peer  
system is to relay data to other peer systems connected to that peer system in that peer-to-  
peer relay network.

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